



# ALL SAINTS' CHURCH

"Our mission is to bring the good news of Jesus Christ's love to our entire community through traditional Anglo-Catholic worship, fellowship, outreach, and Christian formation."

**Our Vision:** "We strive to be a haven of healing, reconciliation, joy and peace in service to our wider community and beyond, so that our example in prayer and practice may reflect Christ's love for us all."

## THIS SUNDAY — October 20, 2024

### The Appetite for God in the Psalms



The most valuable thing about the Psalms, thought C.S. Lewis, is the way in which they express an utter delight in God. In his *Reflections on the Psalms*, Lewis wrote about an "appetite for God." It is, he said, "something astonishingly robust, virile, and spontaneous," something we "may hope to be infected by as we read." Sometimes the poets of the Psalms express this "appetite for God" in visceral terms, evoking a desperate hunger or thirst. Psalm 42, for example,

evokes the image of a deer seeking water in the wilderness to quench its thirst:

"Like as the hart desireth the water-brooks,  
so longeth my soul after thee, O God.

My soul is athirst for God, yea, even for the living God. (Ps. 42:1–2a)

Or again, the psalmist likens himself to a countryside cracked and pitted by drought

My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh also longeth after thee,  
in a barren and dry land where no water is. (63:2)

Or, even more starkly:

"My soul gasps to you like a thirsty land. (143:6b)

It is astonishingly vivid language. What sort of soul expresses such visceral longing for God? Is it simply a person who happens to be spiritually thirsty? Or perhaps someone in dire

straits who is longing for help? Maybe it is someone who had once known a certain intimacy with God and who now longs to experience that sense of closeness again? Maybe it is like a longing for home that is an almost physical feeling in the pit of your stomach? Could it also be, I wonder, a picture of the universal human condition?

“My soul is athirst for God.” It seems to me that this is true of all of us, at all times, whether we are conscious of it or not. You and I are thirsty for God. This is simply what it means to be a creature. Without God, we will die of thirst. Only God can fill our lack. Only God is our life. Sometimes we are more aware of this than other times — as when tragedy strikes or when we know failure or pain — and then we may more earnestly seek God. But whether or not we recognize it, our soul is always thirsty for God. As Augustine prayed in his *Confessions*, “You have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”

Sometimes the Psalms express an “appetite for God” in more relational terms, speaking in the voice of someone who longs to be with a dear friend, or lover. They want to be with God. Nothing delights them more. “In thy presence is the fulness of joy,” they say, “and at thy right hand there is pleasure for evermore” (16:12).

Or again:

My soul hath a desire and longing to enter into the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God. (84:2)

One day spent with God is better than a thousand elsewhere (84:10). They want to remain with God, for nothing to separate them. “O knit my heart unto thee,” they cry (86:11). Evelyn Underhill, the saintly Anglican spiritual writer, once had the temerity to write to the Archbishop of Canterbury, reminding him that “*God* is the interesting thing about religion.” “People are hungry for God,” she insisted. She urged the clergy to remember this and to not act like “consecrated philanthropists,” but to make “Communion with God” their first duty. She called the Church to put nothing before the adoration of God, to worship God with “adoring and disinterested delight.” In “The Parish Priest and the Life of Prayer,” she called priests to live as “one devoted to God, willing and glad to suffer all things for God, penetrated by the attractiveness of God.”

The Psalms often give compellingly expression to this sense of being pierced “by the attractiveness of God.” And Psalm 27 contains my favorite example. The psalmist writes:

One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require;  
even that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,  
to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit his temple. (27:4)

Like Mary of Bethany, who sat at the feet of the Lord Jesus and listened to him, the psalmist has found the “one thing” truly necessary (Luke 10:42). The psalmist wants nothing more than to be where he can continually “behold the fair beauty of the Lord.” He is caught up by “the attractiveness of God.” He burns with a desire to see the Lord’s face, desire which the Lord has awoken within him: “My heart hath talked of thee, Seek ye my face: Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” (27:9)

He has found everything desirable — everything beautiful, everything true, everything good — in God. I am reminded of a passage again from Augustine’s *Confessions*, one which the Catholic philosopher Jean-Luc Marion has described as “a seduction scene.” Augustine, addressing the Lord in the second person, writes,

Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. You called and cried out loud and shattered my deafness. You were radiant and resplendent, you put to flight my blindness. You were fragrant, and I drew in my breath and now pant after you. I tasted you, and I feel but hunger and thirst for you. You touched me, and I am set on fire to attain the peace which is yours.

Notice how emphatically Augustine emphasizes the initiative of God in awakening our desire for him. Our appetite for God is always, already a response to God’s prior action. In this sense, our love for God is always late, always following upon his coming to us, always responsive to his voice, his touch. “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

Reading the Psalms can awake within us an appetite for God. Perhaps this is why they have been given to us. Certainly it is something we may rightly, with C.S. Lewis, “hope to be infected by as we read.”

### [Christopher Yoder](#)

The Rev. Christopher Yoder is rector of All Souls’ Episcopal Church, Oklahoma City. Raised in western Pennsylvania, he studied at Wheaton College and Duke Divinity School.

Fr. Carlos E. Expósito, Rector is away at a Retreat.

Readings for The Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost: Isaiah 53:4-12  
Hebrews 4:12-16 Psalm 91:9-16 Mark 10:35-45

## CALENDAR

Note: We worship in our historic church. The service will also be on Zoom. The Sunday service time is 10:00am, Tuesday Noon Mass

**SUNDAY October 20, 2024 The Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost**

**10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church**

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [w.allsaintschurch.org](http://w.allsaintschurch.org)

Recording of Mass available at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

**Christian Formation and First Communion Instruction for Children**

Ages 5-12 in the Parish Hall from 10:00am-10:45am

**Adult Christian Formation** will meet next on Sunday, October 27  
at noon in the Library

**TUESDAY** Noon Mass in St. Mary Chapel

**THURSDAY** 1:00pm in the Rector's Office -- Devotional Service followed by a Bible Study session based on the readings for the Sunday of that week.

**SUNDAY October 27, 2024 The Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecost**

**10:00am Mass in All Saints' Church**

Join Zoom Meeting from our web site at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

Recording of Mass available at [www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)

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Ages 5-12 in the Parish Hall from 10:00am-10:45am

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### **OUR CORE VALUES:**

- Welcoming strangers like old friends
- Embracing the Anglo-Catholic tradition
- Being dependable members of a caring community
- Respecting each other's differences
- Being faithful stewards of God's gift
- Remembering that God loves everyone unconditionally

An Anglo-Catholic Parish in the Episcopal Diocese of San Diego

[www.allsaintschurch.org](http://www.allsaintschurch.org)